

# ARTICLE ALERT



INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER, U.S. EMBASSY, JAKARTA

Volume 9, September 2010

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## COLUMBUS DAY



Knight of Columbus, Panoramic photographs (Library of Congress)



The first recorded celebration of Columbus Day in the United States took place on October 12, 1792. Organized by The Society of St. Tammany, also known as the Columbian Order, it commemorated the 300th anniversary

of Columbus's landing.

The 400th anniversary of the event, however, inspired the first official Columbus Day holiday in the United States. In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison issued a proclamation urging Americans to mark the day. The public responded enthusiastically, organizing school programs, plays, and community festivities across the country. Columbus and the Discovery of America, Imre Kiralfy's "grand dramatic, operatic, and ballet spectacle," is among the more elaborate tributes created for this commemoration. The World's Columbian Exposition, by far the most ambitious event planned for the celebration, opened in Chicago the summer of 1893.

Over the following decades, the Knights of Columbus, an international Roman Catholic fraternal benefit society, lobbied state legislatures to declare October 12 a legal holiday.

Colorado was the first state to do so on April 1, 1907. New York declared Columbus Day a holiday in 1909 and on October 12, 1909, New York Governor Charles Evans Hughes led a parade that included the crews of two Italian ships, several Italian-American societies, and legions of the Knights of Columbus. Since 1971 Columbus Day, designated as the second Monday in October, has been celebrated as a federal holiday. In many locations across the country Americans parade in commemoration of the day.

Today, many Americans celebrate Columbus Day as a day of rest and relaxation. Appropriately, both hammocks and chocolate were introduced to Europeans by the people of the New World.

Source: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/oct12.html>

Find more information related to Columbus Day at:  
Columbus Day Commemorates Explorer's Arrival in New World: Holiday is also a celebration of Italian-American cultural heritage

Read more: <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2007/October/20071011170524pssnikwad0.9747736.html#ixzz0zUlnpY00>

### About the IRC

The U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center (IRC) in Jakarta is a specialized Reference and Research Library. Its goal is to provide accurate, up-to-date information to the public about topics such as U.S. foreign policy, legislation, social issues, economics and trade. High speed Internet computers, printer and photo copier are provided at the IRC for library users.

Books, articles, and websites described in the Article Alert present a diversity of views in order to keep our IRC users abreast of current issues in the United States. These items represent the views and opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official U.S. Government policy.

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## ARTICLE ALERT

### ECONOMIC SECURITY

1. Heinberg, Richard **COMMUNITY ECONOMIC LABORATORIES (CELS)** (Post Carbon Institute Blog)



As America adjusts to the New Reality of tight credit, chronically less-affordable energy, high unemployment rates, rising levels of homelessness, and steeply declining tax revenues, new strategies will be needed to help swelling ranks of low-income people adjust and

adapt. National policies designed to ease credit, lower mortgage rates, or provide basic financial assistance (including extended unemployment benefits) may help over the short term, but over the longer term many needs will be better met locally by largely volunteer-driven non-profit organizations, co-ops, and hybrid public-private agencies and programs. One strategy worth exploring is the seeding of a loosely coordinated national network of locally-based Community Economic Laboratories (CELS).

2. Lind, Michael **THE FANTASY OF A VAST UPPER MIDDLE CLASS** (Salon.com)

Among the many theories exposed as fallacies by the Great Recession is the idea of the mass upper middle class. During the years of the American bubble economy, progressives and conservatives alike lauded the graduation of most citizens

from the working class to a new elite that included the majority of Americans. For a generation, most Americans have been told that they needed to go to college, invest in the stock market and buy as big a house as possible. One thinker argues otherwise.

3. Levinson, Marc **FAULTY BASEL: WHY MORE DIPLOMACY WON'T KEEP THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM SAFE** (Foreign Affairs, vol. 89, no. 3, May/June 2010, pp. 76-88)

The global financial crisis that began in 2007 marked the failure of an ambitious experiment in financial diplomacy. Since the 1970s, officials from the world's leading economies have worked together to regulate financial institutions with the aim of making the international financial system safer. Inevitably, painful experience has fueled a drive to get financial regulation right. A bevy of obscure multilateral organizations, from the Bank for International Settlements to the International Accounting Standards Board, are now advancing proposals intended to prevent crises in the future. Over time, the Basel Committee acquired numerous siblings. The International Organization of Securities Commissions, established in 1983, brought together the US Securities and Exchange Commission, the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission, and their foreign counterparts to coordinate securities and futures regulation. Around the world, regulators adhering to the Basel II rules required banks to hold less capital against home mortgages than against loans to big companies, which were deemed riskier.

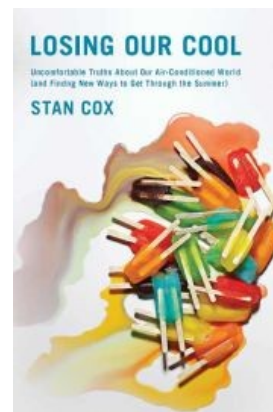
### GLOBAL CHALLENGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

4. Jeremy Hsu **MASS EXTINCTION THREAT: EARTH ON VERGE OF HUGE RESET BUTTON?** (LiveScience.com)

Mass extinctions have served as huge reset buttons that dramatically changed the diversity of species found in oceans all over the world, according to a comprehensive study of fossil records. The findings suggest humans will live in a very different future if they drive animals to extinction, because the loss of each species can alter entire ecosystems. Previous mass extinctions in Earth's geologic history have dramatically changed species diversity. Some scientists speculate that human activity is fueling another mass extinction – with unknowable consequences for the ecosystem.

5. Cox, Stan **WAKING UP FROM THE AIR-CONDITIONED DREAM** (Commondreams.org)

As this torrid summer wears on, electric utilities in all regions



tricking us into eating more.

of the country are struggling to satisfy record demand. The bulk of that extra power is going to run air-conditioning systems, feeding an already hearty appetite. Energy use for air-conditioning America's homes and vehicles has doubled just in the past 15 years. The power we use for air conditioning contributes to greenhouse gas emission. Researchers also note that cooled indoor air undermines our adaptability to heat and may even contribute to obesity by

### INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

6. Bergen, Johan **THE NUCLEAR DOMINO MYTH** (Foreign Affairs online, August 31, 2010)

According to Bergen, research associate at the Henry L. Stimson Center, the historical record does not support a widespread notion that if Iran develops nuclear weapons, other Middle East countries will do so also. Aside from India and Pakistan, no other countries have locked into a race with nuclear neighbors. Also, Iran would likely use a nuclear weapon for deterrence, not as a credible threat to its neighbors, just as other nuclear powers do. Asserting the nuclear domino myth could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, creating excuses for Middle East countries to acquire nuclear weapons.

7. Lichtenstein, Jesse **DIGITAL DIPLOMACY** (New York Times Magazine, July 18, 2010, pp. 24-29)

On Twitter, Jared Cohen and Alec Ross are among the most followed of anyone working for the U.S. government, coming in third and fourth after Barack Obama and John McCain. This didn't happen by chance. Their Twitter posts have be-



Jared Cohen, left, and Alec Ross with mobile devices at the ready.

come an integral part of a new State Department effort to bring diplomacy into the digital age, by using widely available technologies to reach out to citizens, companies and other non-state actors. Traditional forms of diplomacy still dominate, but 21st-century statecraft is not mere corpo-

rate rebranding (swapping tweets for broadcasts). Diplomacy may now include such open-ended efforts as the short-message-service (S.M.S.) social-networking program the State Department set up in Pakistan last fall. The State Department recently cut financing for some activist groups based outside Iran that promote democracy and began to focus on providing information technologies that would facilitate communication among dissidents in Iran. Restrictions imposed by U.S. sanctions were lifted to allow for the export of instant-messaging and anti-filtering software.

### U.S. SOCIETY AND VALUES

8. Samuelson, Robert J. **WHY SCHOOL 'REFORM' FAILS: STUDENT MOTIVATION IS THE PROBLEM.** (Newsweek.com)



R. Michael Stuckey / Getty Images

As 56 million children return to the nation's 133,000 elementary and secondary schools, the promise of "reform" is again in the air. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has announced \$4 billion in Race to the Top grants to states whose proposals demonstrated, ac-

cording to Duncan, "a bold commitment to education reform" and "creativity and innovation [that is] breathtaking." What they really show is that few subjects inspire more intellectual dishonesty and political puffery than "school reform."

9. Douville, Judith A. **TOBACCO SMOKING: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE** (Choice, vol. 47, no. 10, June 2010, pp. 1829-1839)

Cigarette smoking is a major public health problem that affects most segments of society, beginning with teen-agers and working its way up to adults. In fact, several works tar-

get smoking in young people and efforts to prevent them from acquiring this habit. Now, the U.S. Government has spent millions of dollars to commission studies on these types of statistics along with reports on the environmental impact of secondhand smoke, smoking policies, lung cancer and other diseases related to smoking, regulation and litigation, and quitting smoking.

10. Grossmann, John **EXPANDING THE PALETTE** (National Parks, vol. 84, no. 3, Summer 2010)

The U.S. National Parks are becoming more diverse in staff and in visitors, with the help of outreach programs aimed at urban-dwelling minority groups who often have limited exposure to national parks for economic and other reasons. African-Americans, particularly, have avoided rural parks because of memories of discrimination and lynchings of the pre-Civil Rights era. But this is changing as more diversity is reflected in America's park system, exemplified by several individuals profiled in this article who are park rangers or enthusiastic visitors. For more information on National Park Management, please download IRC Information Package at <http://jakarta.usembassy.gov/infoproduct/thematic-information-package.html>

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### Democracy Video Challenge Winners Meet the Secretary

July 2010

Adhyatmika, from Indonesia, was one of six Democracy Video Challenge winners selected from around the world. The winners produced two-minute films about the meaning of democracy.

For details, please visit:

<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/09/146984.htm>

For video, please visit:

<http://www.state.gov/video/?videoid=605788624001>



*Based on mutual respect and shared values, the US Mission works with Indonesia to strengthen democracy, sustain the environment, promote prosperity, enhance understanding and ensure security for our people, our nations, and our region.*